

The Laffite Society Chronicles

VOLUME III NUMBER I
JANUARY, 1997

WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

JULY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

Tom Halko
Lafitte, Louisiana
Patrick Lafitte
Corneilla del Vercol, France
Tom and Sarita Oertling
Galveston, Texas
Jerry and Jennifer Patterson
Houston, Texas

Larry Pierce
Galveston, Texas
R. Patrick Rowles
Galveston, Texas
Kenneth Shelton, Jr.
Galveston, Texas
Lyda Ann Thomas
Galveston, Texas

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at The Eiband Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street, Galveston, TX, 77550, (409) 763-5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by member or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the Annual Holiday Social, which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October) on the same day as that month's general meeting, and normally either precede or follow same. Additional Board of Directors meetings may be scheduled at the Board's discretion.

In addition to the monthly meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. See, for example, in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, the special event described in the article entitled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation," as well as the planned excursion to Grand Isle/Grande Terre mentioned in the "General Meeting and Featured Program Abstracts" section for the October 14, 1996 meeting.

Inquiries about upcoming special events may be directed to The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553, or to Third Vice President - Special Events, Jim Nonus, at (409) 763-5495. The Laffite Society will mail information to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

SPONSORSHIP OF MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

Since its inception, a special feature of The Laffite Society has been a presentation at monthly meetings by a Laffite Society member or guest speaker.

In an effort to augment the pool of available speakers, The Society has begun a program of "sponsorships" in which the expenses of guest speakers are paid by donations from individual members.

Given that all members of The Society do not enjoy equal access to meetings due to their distances from Galveston, it was felt by the Board that any expenses incurred relative to a guest speaker should not be taken from the general fund.

Sponsorships in the suggested amount of

\$20.00 each are available to members who wish to make such donations. While speakers, themselves, do not receive an honorarium, accommodations and other expenses incurred during travel are underwritten by The Laffite Society through these sponsorships of its members.

Members purchasing sponsorships are given special recognition at the appropriate meeting, and in the pages of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Persons wishing to make suggestions regarding future speakers should contact First Vice President Jean L. Epperson in care of The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553.

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THANK YOU FROM THE SOCIETY

The Laffite Society
Post Office Box 1325
Galveston, Texas 77553

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

JEFF MOYZELEWSKI

Greetings from The Laffite Society to our membership and friends upon the publication of this, the fifth semiannual issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

At the time of the Society's formation in August 1994, its founders' goals were basically three.

Goal One was to amass a group of people with an interest in the early 19th-century history of the Gulf Coast in general, and in the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite and their activities in New Orleans, Galveston, and Mexico's Yucatan in particular.

Goal Two was to produce a representation of the tangible results of the group's interest, the semiannual *Laffite Society Chronicles*, designed to be a compilation of scholarly research, anecdote, and news of both educational and entertainment value to members.

Goal Three was to accumulate an archive of relevant materials for the use of Society members and non-members alike in their historical research endeavors.

The Laffite Society's founders made early and rapid progress toward the achievement of all three of these goals. They realized, however, that to avoid their own burnout, an organizational infrastructure would have to be developed and refined so that duties could be distributed to others willing to devote time to their fulfillment.

Hence, in August 1996, when the time came to hold the second regular biannual election of the Board of Directors, some new positions were created, and some existing Board members who, because of other commitments, were unable to continue to contribute actively to the Society's direction voluntarily relinquished their posts.

One of the new Board positions created in August 1996 was that of Editor of Publications, to which I was elected. It is a duty which I take seriously for two principle reasons.

First, it seems that The Laffite Society need not exist if it does not promulgate information in order to stimulate a) further research among, and b) the contribution of knowledge from, those whom it impacts. Otherwise, any enlightenment radiated would be constrained to just that which can be provided by the core group of some fifteen to twenty members who regularly attend the Society's meetings - a serious constraint, indeed, since it is likely that thousands of other interested parties worldwide possess input of value.

Obviously, the founders of The Laffite Society felt similarly, hence Goal Two, described above.

Second, at any given meeting only one-third of our members are present, yet the absent two-thirds pay just as much in dues and deserve a quality product for their support. In fact, it is because of this felt obligation to members who do not attend the monthly meetings that a change was made in the format of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* to present a recap of each monthly meeting, even if a full abstract is not generated as a result of same, so that those not in attendance might obtain a feel for the events which transpired.

I hope all of you take the time to read *The Laffite Society Chronicles* from cover to cover, and I encourage both members and non-members to submit articles for consideration for publication to my attention to Post Office Box 1325, Galveston, TX 77553. Submissions need not be "scholarly," but should bear some relation to the Laffites, their locales, and their era. The editor reserves the right to not publish material deemed not apt for this vehicle, and to edit published material in accord with length and style concerns.

The Board also encourages all members of The Laffite Society to become as involved as they desire in its activities and furtherance. The procurement and setting up of refreshments for the monthly meetings; the suggestion of ideas for topics for presentation at same; the recruitment of new members; the planning of special events such as the summer, 1996, archaeological dig at the supposed site of Laffite's Galveston Island headquarters (see the article in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* titled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation"); these are just a few examples of welcome contributions to the administrative functioning of The Society.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, and I pledge to continue to strive to produce a product in which all members can take pride.



MAISON ROUGE AND *THE PRIDE*: MYTH OR FACT

JEAN L. EFFERSON

Question: What do the Maison Rouge, *The Pride*, and the Yellow Rose of Texas have in common?

Answer: the three are legends which originated with the writer William Bollaert.

Question: Did any contemporaries of Jean Laffite talk about the Red House or his favorite ship, *The Pride*?

Answer: no.

Jean Laffite's house and fort did exist, but was it painted red? Is there any documentary evidence to support the existence of *The Pride*? The Yellow Rose was a real person named Emily D. West, but did she change the history of Texas by entertaining General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto? Some facts about the first two questions will be presented. The third question seems to be an on-going debate and stimulus for further research.

William Bollaert, an English writer, geographer, and ethnologist, visited Texas from February 1842 to July 1844. His writings about Texas were limited to a few scattered articles published in popular journals. His original "Texas Manuscript" consisted of six diaries and two journals which were purchased in 1902 and presented later to the Newberry Library in Chicago¹.

Bollaert was the first person to mention Jean Laffite's Maison Rouge (the "Red House"), the ship *The Pride*, and the Yellow Rose. Bollaert wrote that Colonel G. gave him the descriptive information about Laffite & Company. Colonel G. was James Gaines, who ran a ferry on the Sabine River and who visited Laffite on Galveston Island for several weeks in 1819 on behalf of General James Long. Long was trying to recruit the help of Laffite to advance his conquest of Spanish Texas.

Bollaert's description of the house and fort reads thus:

He (Laffite) built a fort with a ditch around it (part of which ditch could be seen in 1842), and in the interior of his stronghold erected his dwelling place. The envoys (Gaines and Captain H.) left Anahuac in two dugouts (canoes) and on their arrival at the landing-place on Campeachy beach, they were met by a considerable number of Laffite's men, who conducted them to their

chief's residence, which was a sort of fort, having a "look-out" or observatory; the habitation was painted red, and at times was called the "Red House."²

Writers in later years copied Bollaert's description of Laffite's house, saying it was red and sometimes adding their own embellishments. Some of those writers were Henderson Yoakum in 1855, Charles W. Hayes in 1879, John Henry Brown in 1892, Lyle Saxon in 1930, Stanley Clisby Arthur in 1952, and others. Hayes described the structure as a large and substantial two-story frame house painted red, while Saxon wrote that Laffite's new dwelling was a combination of residence and fort, strongly constructed and painted bright red, with cannon visible through apertures in the upper story³. Surely Laffite was not so stupid as to mount cannon in a two story frame structure.

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, later president of the Republic, interviewed James Gaines around 1837-1838, when he was gathering material for a history of Texas. Gaines reminisced about Laffite but did not mention Maison Rouge or *The Pride*.

It is significant that others who were on Galveston Island during Laffite's residence did not mention the color of the house⁴. Randall Jones journeyed to Galveston in 1818 to buy black slaves and said that Laffite had a "pretty good house." There was no mention of it being painted red⁵. Mary, wife of Burrell Franks, recalled in 1883 that she ran a boarding-house near Laffite's storehouse on the island and that Laffite lined his house with tin to keep the rats out⁶. There was nothing mentioned about its color.

Even George Graham, sent to Galveston by the United States government, said nothing about an unusual color. In a letter written at Galveston on August 20, 1818, just before the September hurricane which virtually destroyed the community, Graham reported that General Lallemande and Laffite occupied separate establishments. Laffite lived on a strongly built brig of 353 tons fixed in the sand about four hundred yards north of the fort. He used the brig as a dwelling, storehouse and arsenal⁷. Who was occupying the fort? Graham's detailed description of the brig suggests he would have mentioned a red house!

The hurricane of September 1818 caused

the fort, a large blockhouse used for defense as well as storage for valuable merchandise, to collapse. The waves washed away the sand beneath the building, leaving a huge pit. A few women, children, and invalids had taken refuge in the building and some of these were crushed to death, according to Dr. J.O. Dyer⁸. Dyer was a Galveston physician who wrote from the 1880's through the 1920's about the early pirates and privateers on the island. He had supposedly acquired his information from those inhabitants who had been in residence during the time Galveston was a corsair base.

Laffite must have rebuilt his fort, as he was said to have burned it along with all the other buildings when he left the island. Lieutenant Lawrence Kearney in the United States brig-of-war *The Enterprise* reported on March 7, 1820, that Laffite's house was burned and his works of defense razed⁹. Laffite left the island soon thereafter never to return.

Bollaert's inaccurate statement that Lieutenant Kearney visited Galveston in 1821 and that Laffite left the island that year has been copied and recopied. It has led to confusion about Laffite's departure date even today.

The first person to mention the ship *The Pride* was William Bollaert. He said the ship was a fine brig mounting fourteen guns, a former slaver taken by Laffite, which became his favorite vessel¹⁰. No contemporary records nor persons have been found alluding to a ship named *The Pride*.

Stanley Clisby Arthur, who wrote extensively about Laffite, said

The fact that there are, apparently, no records designating a ship of that name in any of the privateering fleets, either at Baratavia or Galveston, forces us to the conclusion that *The Pride* was a mythical corsair, one that was never launched, one that never sailed the blustery deep, and one that existed only in the imagination of a fertile brain.¹¹

It has been concluded that William Bollaert was a gifted journalist who relied on second-hand information, imagination, and literary hyperbole.

Notes

1. Ron Tyler, et al, eds., *The New Handbook of Texas*, 6 vols. (Austin: Texas State Historical Assoc., 1996), I, 628.
2. William Bollaert, "Life of Jean Lafitte," *Littell's Living Age* (March 1852), 441.
3. Charles W. Hayes, *Galveston, History of the Island and the City*, 2 vols. (Austin: Jenkins Garrett Press, 1974), I, 34; Lyle Saxon, *Lafitte the Pirate* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co.), 216.
4. Charles Adams Gulick, et al, eds., *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, 6 vols. (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1921-1927), I, 284-287.
5. Randall Jones, "A Visit to Galveston Island in 1818," typescript in the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.
6. *Galveston Daily News*, Dec. 11, 1883. "Mrs. Franks the First White Woman of Galveston Island."
7. Ibid. August 8, 1886.
8. *Galveston Daily News*, April 30, 1920. "Some Sidelights on Buccaneering" by J.O. Dyer, M.D.
9. U.S. Federal Archives, Record Group 45, #108, Office of Naval Records Library, Naval Records Collection, Captain's Letters to Secretary of the Navy 1807-1885, M-125. Roll 66, Vol. I, for 1820.
10. William Bollaert, "Life of Jean Laffite," 442.
11. Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Jean Laffite Gentleman Rover* (New Orleans: Harmanson, 1952), 218.

LAFFITE BROTHERS & CO., BUCCANEERS

OR, THE IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

BERTRAND GUILLOT DE SUDIRAUT

[TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH BY DOROTHY MCD. KARILANOVIC]

[Editor's note: The Laffite Society is grateful to Mr. Bertrand Guillot de Sudiraute for his permission to print the following article. It was originally published in the bulletin *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe* ("Genealogy and History of the Caribbean"), No. 82, pp. 1618 - 1620, May 1996.]

Preceding issues of *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe* have opened new avenues of interest as a result of further research carried out in Bordeaux. We can now attempt to put to the test a point concerning presumed origins of our pirates. We shall not return to their buccaneering activities, but will only make reference to them at the end in trying to clear the tangled path of their roots.

Upon verification, many of the different places of origin now and then cited - Saint-Jean-d'Angély, Digne, Nice, Bilbao, Dijon, Dax - appear without foundation. The registers of the former civil state in these towns remain mute on the individuals connected to the family that occupies our attention. Only three possible trails remain open to us. The first is the Bordeaux; the second, the Basque; and the third, the Santo-Domingan.

The Bordeaux Trail

This trail is confirmed by the baptismal registers of the church of Saint Seurin, where we have been able to pick up the births of six children of Antoine Laffite, rope maker, and of Guillemette Chataigné, his wife.

A. 12 April 1772 - Pierre Laffite: p., Pierre Pendelé; m., Jeanne Sudre (see I, below)

B. 6 May 1774 - Alexandre Laffite: p., Alexandre Laffite; m., Marie-Anne Sudre (see II, below)

C. 6 May 1774 - Marie Laffite, twin sister of the preceding

D. 24 December 1779 - Marie-Thérèse Laffite: p., Pierre Laffite; m., Marie-Ursule Laffite

E. 6 July 1781 - Jean Laffite: p., Jean Vivie; m., Marie-Gabrielle Faure

F. 15 August 1782 - Jean Laffite: p., Pierre Mathieu; m., Marie Morin (see III, below)

I. Pierre Laffite ¹

Son of Antoine Laffite and of Guillemette

Chataigné, born in Bordeaux in 1772, he is officially identified by his marriage in St.-Jean-de-Luz on December 29, 1793, with Sabine d'Amespil. The baptismal record is certified on his marriage writ. The descendants of their last daughter, Marie-Anne (born St.-Jean-de-Luz 5 June 1797, married Martin Goyetche), continue to this date. It is noted that the father is said to have been in Bayonne during this baptism.

According to the manuscript of Léonce Goyetche, Pierre disappeared, abandoning wife and children. If this is, indeed, the same person, we see him reappearing in April 1804 in New Orleans in the company of his cadet brother, Jean, on board two pirate ships (cf. Archives of the Federal Court of Louisiana). The adventures of their careers are repeated in all the historical novels.

Pierre never returned to France, perhaps because there was a risk of being charged with bigamy. A Pierre Laffite was known (but is he the same?) to have married Françoise Sel L'Étang in Louisiana about 1810. She gave him many children, one of them a son named Charles Laffite with descendants in the family Esnoul de Livaudais.

According to Georges Blond in his *History of the Buccaneer* and the American writer Stanley C. Arthur in *Jean Laffite, Gentleman Rover*, Pierre Laffite would have died in Crevecoeur, Missouri, in 1837, at age sixty-five years, which corresponds exactly to his date of birth in Bordeaux.

A year later in 1838, the manuscript previously cited in an earlier issue of *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe* reported that an American lawyer presented himself in France at the home of the descendants of Pierre Laffite, the Goyetche family, with the intention of obtaining from them the authority to recover his fortune, impounded in American banks. The lawyer was refused.

II. Alexandre Laffite

Curiously, one finds this same given name with reference to buccaneering in a brother of Pierre and Jean Laffite, better known as Alexandre Frédéric or Dominique You, and sometimes under the sobriquet "Captain You". This Alexandre also followed the same career as Pierre and Jean and

participated in the same operations ².

III. Jean Laffite

His identity is confirmed by his baptismal record of 1782 - the first Jean having, without doubt, died at an early age. It was a custom of the times to give the same name to the next boy child born.

Jean would have been twenty-two years of age at the time of his arrival with his older brother Pierre in New Orleans in 1804. This date of birth (15 August 1782) corresponds well to the one indicated by Jean Laffite in the *Journal of Jean Laffite*. The *Journal* was written about 1845-1850 and miraculously rediscovered and published in 1958 under Stanley C. Arthur's name with the admission that there was a question about the authenticity of the text (which controversy continues to this day).

Even if the cited date of birth is indeed the same, Jean Laffite nevertheless declared in the *Journal* that he was born in Santo Domingo and not at Bordeaux, the son of Marcus Laffite and of Marie Zora Nadrimal (we will find this reference mentioned again below on our Santo-Domingan "trail").

What is one to think about the change in location for place of birth? Could this have been for the purpose of concealing his origins and his past life as a buccaneer?

In about 1805-1810, when he was engaged in a lumber business and particularly in the shipping of ebony in New Orleans, Jean stated that he was born in Bordeaux, which he left at a young age with his parents for Santo Domingo. He tells of then being married, becoming a widower, and of launching himself into the activities with which we associate him.

If one matches the time of birth (15 August 1782) in the *Journal* previously cited, he would have been forty-eight years old when he met in 1830 Emma Mortimore, whom he married in 1832 under the name of John Lafflin. This holds true for his date of death in 1854 at the age of 72 years - he would have been born in 1782 (cf. Georges Blond and other sources, including the *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe* reference concerning Stanley C. Arthur and his book *Jean Laffite, Gentleman Rover*).

Is the Bordeaux trail the right one? The convergences are multiple without being otherwise certain.

The Goyetche manuscript written by the historian Léonce Goyetche, member of the historic Academy of Paris and grandson of Pierre Laffite, cannot be considered spurious. However, in this

unpublished testimony certain dates do not correspond.

Léonce Goyetche writes that, after having temporarily quit the army, Pierre Laffite re-enlisted and participated in the Napoleonic campaigns with the grade of Captain. Goyetche further states it was not until 1810 that Pierre abandoned his family for Louisiana. The official archives of Louisiana state that a Pierre Laffite found himself in New Orleans in 1804. In response to the question, is this the same Pierre Laffite?, it is not possible that one man could have been in Louisiana and also in the services of the Grand Army of Napoleon at the same time.

Relating these events more than sixty years after, one can suppose that Léonce Goyetche might have committed an error in the dates. That Pierre Laffite abandoned his family is, indeed, apparent. Despite the hiatus, one might say that the agreement of the dates of birth in Bordeaux might present a possible lead to the beginning of a solution. Nevertheless, proof is missing.

The Basque Trail

Let's recall briefly ³ that we find three brothers, all natives of Biarritz, sons of Laurent Laffite (1753-1795) and of Marie Daguerre (born in Bidart, 1747). The latter died in 1809 in Bordeaux, where she came to establish herself in 1793 with her last son, ten years of age at that time. These three children are:

Pierre - born 2 November 1773, died in Santa Lucia 4 December 1838 (see I, below)

Louis - born 24 October 1779, died at Bordeaux 13 January 1851 (see II, below)

Jean, the cadet - born 6 October 1783 (see III, below)

I. Pierre Laffite

After a career as a well known naval officer, Pierre leaves France for the Antilles after 1795. The presence of a Pierre-Laurent Laffite (without doubt, the same?) is noted in 1810 on the island of Santa Lucia at the head of a coffee-house, and in Castries where he is mentioned as a notary and member of a Masonic lodge. His passage to Philadelphia in 1822 is noted. He dies in Santa Lucia in 1838.

From his marriage with Anne-Rose Kélénie Delord will come eight children, born in 1807, 1810, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1820, 1824, and 1828. These descendants are known from correspondence which he addressed to his cadet brother Louis in Bordeaux. Although the places of birth were not mentioned, they are probably Castries at Santa Lucia.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to see this person on his plantation in Santa Lucia while carrying on his buccaneer activities in Barataria and New Orleans at the same time and in the same years. Unless - a hypothesis - Santa Lucia only served him as a secondary base for his pirating activities, and he conceived his children between two ports of call.

II. Louis Laffite

Installed as a businessman and shipping broker in Bordeaux where he resided at Pier 2, Chartrons, Louis Laffite married Jenny Bradshaw there in 1807. They had seven children. From the marriage of their oldest daughter, Anna-Maria, in 1810 to Jean Frédéric Klipsch, came descendants of numerous business families who are present today in Bordeaux ⁴.

Louis Laffite died in Bordeaux on 13 January 1851. His second son, Jean-Laurent, born in 1812, married Emma Sikle in Philadelphia in 1835. It is not known to this day why, in the relationship between Pierre and Louis - for example, in their correspondence referred to above, and also in Pierre's correspondence in which he gives a brief summary of his positions of service - Louis did not make mention of his cadet brother, Jean. Those papers we have on hand are conserved by a branch of Bordeaux descendants of Louis Laffite, the Rogier family.

III. Jean Laffite

Except for his record of birth in Biarritz in 1783, this third son remains unknown. It is certain only that he followed his mother to Bordeaux and that eventually there was no trace of him. Could our principal hero have left to join his older brother? If this is the case, he has succeeded in confusing all the trails.

This Basque trail - does it present another credible solution? How is it that for the Bordeaux trail, the birth dates correspond closely to those of our individuals? But this is not sufficient evidence.

The respective careers of Pierre and Louis seem to be, for the former, a colonist on the islands, and for the latter, a well-established businessman from Bordeaux. As for the third, we arrive at nothing!

We may add that Grace King, in her book *New Orleans, the Land and its People*, written in 1895, speaks (but without citing a reference to the civil record) of Pierre and Jean Laffite's births at Bayonne, near Biarritz.

One can again read in *The Life and Times*

of Jean Laffite, Vol. XII, Spring, 1992, from an author using the pen name of Dr. J.O. Dyer, that "Jean Laffite was born of a noble family in France in 1783 in the province of Hautes-Pyrénées. His father and his mother were guillotined during the Revolution. When Jean was 17 years old, he emigrated with Pierre to Martinique where during a year or more he lived on a sugar plantation. Jean and Pierre then emigrated to New Orleans in 1803 where they became contrabandists..."

The Santo-Domingan Trail

Since the discovery and the publication by Stanley C. Arthur of the *Journal of Jean Laffite*, this source has become the one repeated by the majority of authors treating the subject, Georges Blond among others. Do we have to believe in its authenticity? Opinions are divided. Even within the American association "The Laffite Study Group," some are for, and defend the authenticity of, the manuscript. Others only see in this document a skillfully assembled historical montage of facts and the apocryphal. Where is the truth? It is difficult to see with clarity.

What of the parish register of Santo Domingo, from which was issued a genealogical table on four sheets which we have before us? Drawn up in 1976 by Robert Alderdice (?), it reads as follows:

Marcus Laffite (1763-1817), married Marie Zora Nadrimal (died Port-au-Prince 1783), daughter of Abhorad Nadrimal and of Zora (1730-1804). Eight children were born of this marriage, as follows:

1. N. Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1767, died Charleston 1845
2. Anna Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1769, died Port-au-Prince 1811
3. Alexandre F. Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1771, died New Orleans circa 1830
4. Marcus Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1773, died Port-au-Prince 1811
5. Henri Laffit, born Port-au-Prince 1775, died Cartagena 1840
6. Yvonne Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1777, died Philadelphia 1850
7. Pierre Antoine Laffite, born Port-au-Prince 1779, died Crevecoeur, Missouri, 1844
8. Jean Laffite, both Port-au-Prince 1782, died Alton, Illinois, 1854

One can remark that the third, Alexandre F., could be Captain You, cited in all the writings as an older brother of Pierre and Jean, our

principle individuals who figure in seventh and eighth positions above.

This American genealogy is more complete, with the descendants of Jean Laffite and with his first wife, Christina Lewein, or Levine, native of Sainte-Croix, daughter of Michael Lewein and of his second wife, Rachel Faucette, who would have had from another marriage with James Hamilton a son with the given name of Alexander⁵.

This same record gives next the second marriage of Jean Laffite in 1832 with Emma Mortimore. One finds still in this same table the descendants of the captain, Beluche, referred to in the novels, as a relative of the Laffite brothers. We see also that Beluche descended from a Beluchais/Sandoval family, in which the members would have been baptized in St.-Jean-de-Luz, where I, being in that place, was able to confirm that there exists no such trace in the local archives.

All of this would be perfect and the problem resolved if the archives of Port-au-Prince revealed to us all these births. The research carried out by Monsieur Pierre Bardin on the parish records prior to that of ours testifies to the total absence of all of our buccaneers for the cited dates⁶.

Unless Jean Laffite has disguised the truth, he was not born in any parish in Santo Domingo.

Temporary Conclusion

Except in the event of new and uncontestable discoveries, one must admit that Laffite Brothers & Co., Buccaneers, have done all they can to conceal their origins. If the Bordeaux trail presents some clues that would demand a research pursuit, the Basque trail, except for the same given names and approximate dates of birth, does not offer sufficiently conclusive proof. But does one ever know?

The Santo-Domingan Trail remains. On paper it appears without contest. It follows and confirms the "famous rediscovered journal" of Jean Laffite. Point by point, everything lines up exactly, lacking proof only! When our friends in Louisiana have provided the origins of this reconstruction, precise dates, authentic copies of records and the address of the archives where we can see them, we will then be able to lock up this dossier.

In our opinion, none of these three trails provides us to date with a definitive genealogical answer. This inquiry will, perhaps, continue in subsequent issues.

Questions

Island of Santa Lucia (Sainte-Lucie)

One of the daughters of Pierre Laffite (from the Basque "trail"), Nelly, born 1 January 1815, would have married, on 16 August 1838, N. Piet, a notary. Do the registers in Santa Lucia exist for that period?

Vincennes (Military Archives)

As far the career of Pierre Laffite (from the Bordeaux "trail"), alleged captain in the Napoleonic armies, would it be possible to find in those archives indications of his time of military service?

Embarkation for the Islands

An analysis of the embarkation registries of Bayonne, Bordeaux, Nantes, La Rochelle, and other port cities, might give some indication of the ship passages made by the Laffites.

Martinique

A Mr. Barboteau, resident of Saint-Pierre, would have been in direct contact with Louis Laffite of Santa Lucia (Sainte Lucie) or with his brother, Pierre, a businessman in Bordeaux. What can we learn of this person?

Santo Domingo (Saint Domingue)

Regarding the baptismal records of Port-au-Prince in the years before 1782, can they be consulted? If so, can one find in them a trace of the presumed relatives of Pierre and Jean Laffite?

Notes

1. *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 63, September, 1994, p. 1152; original manuscript of the historian Léonce Goyetche (1822-1885), grandson of Marie Anne Laffite and of Martin Goyetche (1792-1878).
2. Master's thesis in Spanish of Sylvie-Béatrice Robin, and other sources, of which *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 70, 1995, p. 1329.
3. *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 64, October, 1994, p. 1182; December, 1994, p. 1215; June, 1995, p. 1371.
4. *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 70, April, 1995, p. 1338, article by Chotard.
5. *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 72, June, 1995, p. 1371.
6. *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 64, October, 1995, pp. 1174-1175.

THE SHIPS' OFFICERS

(PART I)

WIL ZAPALAC

Author's Note to Readers: The more things change, the more they stay the same. This old saw of a saying is what I base these works and conjectures upon...written for The Laffite Society, its members, *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, and other readers. The following is my third offering and, due to space considerations, will appear in three parts. [Editor's note: Mr. Zapalac's first article for the Society, "Laffite's Men (Humor)," appeared in the second issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, in July 1995; his second submission, "The Ships' Cooks," was published in the third issue, in January 1996.]

An interesting fact I took hard notice of, while working alongside present day Cajun/Creole/French maritime officers, was a bit of aloofness. It seemed almost as if they were at times immensely distracted; as if they were pondering some weighty question God had just asked of them, and could care less if your pants - or theirs - were on fire.

Of course, taking into consideration that Jean Laffite and his many captains, chief cannoneers, and other officers existed during times where image and follow-through on customs, etiquette, and attempts at civilized social behavior were supposedly demanded, one would say that bravado was most certainly thick and heavy. It still holds through and true with many present-day maritime officers in the Gulf.

Many a member of The Laffite Society knows well that any cold, hard fact on Jean Laffite and his maneuvers is not quite so easy to compile. However, one trait I have noted of Commandant Laffite was his demanding and receiving of loyalty. Just to possess the abilities as a regular sea captain in Laffite's time was one huge attribute, given the demanding hardships and sacrifices. But - *but* - to hold the rank of captain in Laffite's roving sea force...hmm.

It would be safe to assume that, upon various occasions, immense workloads were required of Laffite's officers. For not only was the base at Baratavia constructed, but the base at Galveston. Slaves from Africa would have known little of carpentry and such. So one can only conclude that this meant the captains and/or "lieutenants" (another name for "mates" or "first officers") would have had to tear themselves away from the dice and wine from time to time.

And, thanks to errant U.S. forces and Mother Nature, both Baratavia and Galveston were to have been essentially reconstructed.

I would say that, of all of Laffite's "employed" sea captains, Captain James Campbell was the prime example of what Jean Laffite found desirable in an officer.

Level-headed. Practical. Daring and intelligent.

To be able to give orders, one must first learn how to take orders. And, after being tempted by the sudden and immense amounts of booty to which Laffite opened avenues, it had to have been quite difficult to remain totally constant to the Commandant's orders and suggestions, while resisting the urge to sail without his valued letters of marque.

Like many good leaders, Laffite did not seem terribly interested in beating submission or cooperation out of his captains. Instead, if one showed more than the normal or expected level of rebellion or independence, Laffite simply appeared to play out just enough line or rope for the man to hang his own damned self. Such was the case of Captain George Brown or Ratti (I tend to agree with the school of thought which holds that this was one and the same person). Studies show that not only did Ratti become gallows carrion, so did sixteen others.

One would dare say that if a modern-day feminist could have attended one of Laffite's gatherings of captains...well. With such a large number of even larger egos, a dirigible in a thunderstorm comes to mind. When not totally ignoring her, they probably would have had her chasing for wine.

Just how the Commandant managed to keep control of his hungry lions is very interesting in itself. Going for each other's throats at one moment. Then pouncing on anything and everything else, at the next.

Moody, hard-headed and unpredictable, many of Laffite's officers were difficult, to say the least. Yet, he knew the value of setting a notable example, and did so.

This, coupled with the fact that Laffite did not mention in his journal of any duels between him and his own men, gives more light as to what his officers were like. Even the rougher diamonds did not care to mess with the boss. Most had obtained their own cutlery skills through

experience alone, while Laffite underwent expert training at a tender age. One could be wild and one could be dumb. But not both. Not for very long, anyway.

According to the Mirabeau B. Lamar journal, one Captain Marrott(e) was found to have tried to cheat Laffite of captured booty while sailing under his command at Galveston. Accused of such by Captain James Campbell, who had sailed with Marrott(e) on that particular privateering expedition, and strongly and publicly reprimanded by Laffite at a council meeting, Marrott(e) (as Campbell related to Lamar) "spit in Laffite's face," whereupon Laffite made a grab for him, missed, and was restrained by his own men. Pleading with Laffite not to murder the man outright, they cried for him to challenge Marrott(e) to a duel.

Such was arranged to occur on the dueling field at Pelican Isle. With Campbell serving as Laffite's second and a certain Shebal as Marrott(e)'s, Marrott(e) spent an unusually long time preparing himself at the field, only to suddenly state (according to Campbell) that he "felt himself in error and was ready to restore the secreted boxes [prize]." Laffite then grabbed him by the shoulders, turned him right face, gave him a kick and dismissed him.

Aside from showing that Laffite was right-footed with his kicks, this also shows that Marrott(e) either sobered up or came to his senses enough to remember Laffite's dueling reputation.

By "dismissed", one would think that Campbell meant that Marrott(e) was drummed out of Laffite's force and became just another scummy pirate.

However, Laffite, in his journal, states that Marrott(e) made a return "visit" and was killed, along with most of his gang, thus dying for a small prize when many larger ones might have been orderly obtained.

Greedy, selfish, and lazy. Most certainly not all. But enough. Enough to have kept the Commandant's attention.

And, no doubt when a duel between captains was agreed upon, many a remembered blow or kick were in the minds of the crews as they followed the quarreling parties to the dueling fields of Baratavia or Pelican Isle.

Wine-guzzling gamblers.

This particular aspect holds true of even their more peaceful counterparts. I have heard a first-hand description of a captains' card game in

the bayou where each positioned an ice chest on either side of their seats. One for refreshments and one for money.

Laffite's captains, from records I have read of them, seemed to have dabbled in everything from harems of concubines, to the acknowledged mistress with wife, to almost Quaker-like marital arrangements.

At the base or camp at Galveston or Campeachy, booty and loot and all the expensive trappings that came from the Commandant's off-shore endeavors might have been plentiful, but any approachable females were rare to non-existent. Many men took up with slave women.

Any free young woman that did courageously travel to Laffite's lairs not only had to watch out for the rougher diamonds, but the *mademoiselles des capitains*, as well. These sea-lionesses could ably hold their own against half-crazed sons of guns and did not especially care for any piece of fluff with baggage that crossed their patrol paths.

No doubt but that of any duels that Laffite did allow to occur, some bubbled up due to disagreements over these *mademoiselles des capitains*.

There were times when I watched, either in general amusement or dulled boredom, the antics of some Cajun captains among the females of a foreign bar or business. The flair, the supposed disinterest, then the setting of the hook. Due to age and experience, the married mariners were better equipped to woo secretaries, female police, etc. Yet fidelity nowadays, with some of the attached captains, is a genuine article. So it was a flirtatious look here and there, then back to the boat.

One term or phrase that one may still hear from time to time among certain Cajun/French/Creole boat captains is *deux tasses de café*, again lending some credibility to Laffite's journal. I only heard the phrase used in a mysterious, off-hand, joking manner. Of course.

There appear to be many varied reasons as to why so many strong-willed and independent men chose to sail, work and fight for Jean Laffite. And, of course, one such huge reason was large and immediate chance of fortune.

I believe another great reason was Laffite's ability to dispense responsibility with authority added to it. By going out of his way to give his officers a say in many affairs, he held such effective control as would make a present-day CEO salivate.

THE ROAD TO KLOTZVILLE

JEFF MODZELEWSKI

Readers of the previous issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* shared, via print, in the scheduled activities of the Society's special event of June 1996, the "Plantation Tour". This article describes an experience during that trip which affected a small subset of its participants, an experience which did not figure into the planned itinerary, but one which nevertheless bore a not insignificant similarity to our quest for the facts of the life of Jean Laffite.

On Thursday, June 13, 1996, our group was scheduled to meet for dinner at Laffite's Landing Restaurant on the Viala Plantation, some miles southeast of Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Since nearly all of us were unfamiliar with the area's geography except for that superficial knowledge which a map can provide, and since the journey each way would be of a duration of one half-hour or more, most participants elected to car-pool in groups to the dinner from the plantation bed-and-breakfasts at which they were lodging, Nottoway and Oak Alley. A couple from Galveston graciously offered to provide transportation in their vehicle for my wife and I and a third couple, and we gratefully accepted.

With spirits elevated in anticipation of the extended weekend's activities just begun that morning, our group struck out for the restaurant from White Castle, Louisiana, some fourteen miles to the northwest. A quick glance at a road atlas, unfortunately - and tellingly - left behind at our lodgings, had provided us with the confidence that the eatery would be easily located. We motored south on Louisiana State Highway 1 in the still-daylight, chatting animatedly all the while, and arrived at the restaurant in due course.

A wonderful, leisurely meal, coupled with an interesting talk by restaurant management about the history of the locale, contributed to an evening of congenial fellowship. As the night advanced, groups of participants intermittently drifted off in different vehicles toward their night's hostelry.

And so too, eventually, did we six. Although darkness had long since cloaked the Cajun countryside, we had encountered no difficulty finding Laffite's Landing, and thus anticipated none on the return trip. Contentedly discussing the activities of that day and evening, and those anticipated to be enjoyed come the morrow, our sextet headed back in the direction of Donaldsonville - or so we thought.

After some ten minutes of driving, we arrived at a four-way-stop intersection. The road crossing the one on which we were traveling was marked "LA 1", and we turned onto it in the direction we assumed was north.

Soon, however, we began to feel misgivings about our choice of route. Even after taking into account the difference in appearance that an unfamiliar road can exhibit in darkness versus in daylight, no landmarks seemed familiar.

More disconcertingly, town names on the intermittent road signs were not those of any village through which we had passed on the trip to the restaurant several hours earlier. Two of these names, "Paincourtville" and "Napoleonville", at least seemed to mesh with our environs - French names in Louisiana Cajun country. But one seemed singularly incongruous: "Klotzville", a German name, a name which conjured visions of a Pennsylvania Dutch settlement arising from its rightful place among the Mid-Atlantic states, starting to wander, becoming lost, and eventually plopping itself down 1,500 miles southwest of its true place in United States geography.

After some short minutes of discussion, our group decided to turn back toward whence we had come.

Secure in the knowledge that we had traveled on LA 1 from White Castle to Donaldsonville, we surmised that we had lost our senses of direction in the dark land of the bayou and turned toward the south originally at the four-way crossroads, instead of toward the north. Thus, when we again reached the intersection, we continued straight on across, remaining on LA 1.

However, this route soon seemed just as unfamiliar as did our previous one, and after traveling four or five miles, we again turned around and retraced our path to the crossroads, now beginning to lament having left our map at Nottoway.

Until this time in our trek, the group had been joking about our misadventure. Indeed, our driver elicited a collective, hearty guffaw from the other riders when he mentioned that, although he felt embarrassed to admit it, he had been a licensed navigator during a long career in the military.

But the charm of our meandering now started to wane. The clock was ticking along toward midnight, we were traversing a rural area miles from the interstate highway in a vehicle

conspicuous for its out-of-state license plates, and the experience was beginning to mimic an episode of Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone".

Once again at the crossroads, we tried the third of its four possible directional choices, and achieving no better results, returned to try the fourth. Again failing to recognize anything familiar along the route, we regressed to the intersection yet once more and - by this time feeling both decidedly embarrassed as well as increasingly frustrated - tried our first direction anew, hoping in desperation that during our initial foray along it, we had simply not stayed our course long enough to reach recognizable surroundings.

Suffice it to say that, due to the intervening travails, our second pass through Klotzville did not possess the charm of our first.

The twists and turns of our study of Jean Laffite often bear a resemblance to those of this road trip through the dark Louisiana countryside. Certain facts provide us our main route - our "Laffite Highway 1" - but we soon find ourselves on detours and in cul-de-sacs, as our research leads us to destinations which we had no idea existed and which we are not certain we wish to visit.

The days of Laffite's Grande Terre stronghold, his band's participation in the Battle of New Orleans, and his multiple-year sojourn on Galveston Island, all are a Laffite Highway 1 of incontrovertible fact. The search for the facts of the place and date of the privateer's birth and his post-Galveston history, however, lead us through many Klotzvilles. Yet our endeavor continues, for every so often, after such an obstacle, our spirits are buoyed as we regain - at least temporarily - the main highway.

And what became of our errant sextet as one day's night edged toward the next day's morning? as we wandered with waning good humor, increasing fatigue, and mounting trepidation through the deserted and dark Louisiana countryside? through small, rural towns with foreign-sounding names, towns that had likely not changed perceptibly for multiple generations, towns shut up as tight as a drum on a warm and humid weeknight on the eve of summer?

Our tale ends happily, for the group eventually found its way back to Nottoway Plantation. Despite the late hour, once back in our room my wife and I consulted our map, curious to uncover our navigational errors. Those who are interested in the unscrambling of the puzzle, read on.

Picture three roads forming an asymmetrical triangle, with one corner of the triangle pointing north, the second east, and the third southwest. Next, picture roads passing outward, away from the triangle, through these corners, as extensions of some of the triangle's sides.

On the trip to Laffite's Landing Restaurant, we had come down through Donaldsonville into the north point of the triangle, southbound on LA 1. This highway continued on to form the left side of the triangle and, afterward, became the road extending to the southwest from the figure's southwest corner.

Our vehicle had, however, branched off of LA 1 onto the right side of the triangle - a smaller road than LA 1 - and then out the eastern corner of the figure. The change in direction had been so gradual that it had seemed to us that it was we who had stayed on the major artery, and that it was the lesser thoroughfare that had in fact digressed via a much more pronounced right turn.

After leaving the restaurant for the return trip, we missed this same cut-off back up the right side of the triangle to LA 1 northbound, and continued, unknowingly, westward, along the bottom side of the figure, LA 70. We eventually did meet up with LA 1 again, at the southwest corner of the triangle, but this point lay farther south, by about eight miles, of that at which we had branched off of LA 1 on the trip to the restaurant.

This southwest corner of the triangle was the four-way crossroads now indelibly printed in all of our minds. Readers who consult their maps will find that it lies about 1.5 miles south of Klotzville and about two-thirds of a mile north of Paincourtville, at the intersection of LA 1 and LA 70, some eight miles as the crow flies southwest of Donaldsonville. (Note that Klotzville is a small settlement and is not marked on all maps.)

Thus, although we had indeed turned, correctly, northward at this intersection in our first (and fifth!) attempts to find our way back to Nottoway, the landmarks and town names indeed were unfamiliar. We had been traveling in the proper direction on the proper road, but we had not traveled that particular stretch of it previously.

Jeff Modzelewski has renounced any plans he might once have entertained to start his own business conducting driving tours of Acadiana, and sincerely hopes that he does much less damage in his present role of Editor of Publications for The Laffite Society.

GRAPHIC IMAGES OF JEAN LAFFITE (PART II OF II)

R. DALE OLSON AND DIANE OLSON

Editor's note: this is Part II of a two-part article which analyzes various purported likenesses of Jean Laffite. Part I contained an introduction, an overview of the analytical process, and a description of two of the nine images analyzed; it appeared in the previous issue of The Laffite Society Chronicles as the Program Abstract for the January 1996 featured presentation. Part II of the series contains a description of the remaining seven images analyzed, the results of the analysis, and a reference section.

The Images (continued)

3) *Laffite Owned by Fortier* - This is a well executed bust drawing which is signed illegibly. It is reproduced in an undated book on the city of New Orleans by Jack D.L. Holmes and Raymond J. Martinez. Holmes and Martinez claim that the drawing is "probably the only authentic picture of Jean Laffite". It is



Laffite Owned by Fortier

the property of Gilbert J. Fortier, Jr., of Louisiana. The authors do not provide any documentation for their assertion. The picture again shows Laffite in the three-quarters view, but with his head turned, looking at the artist. Although the picture is undated, the subject appears to be somewhat heavier and older than that of the Laffite by Gros.

4) *Laffite by Van Everen* - This is a drawing, serving as the frontispiece of *Jean Laffite* by Mitchell Charnley, executed by Jay Van

Everen. The drawing, again showing Laffite's face in a three-quarters view, depicts an elegantly attired individual wearing a type of cap not generally associated with the wardrobe of a pirate. Perhaps Van Everen gained his perception of Laffite's appearance partially from a description by Bollaert (1851) who reported that the privateer wore a "... species of green uniform," with an "... otter skin cap".



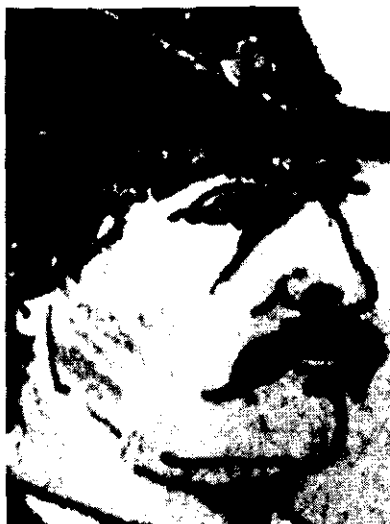
Laffite by Van Everen

Van Everen was a magazine illustrator whose representation is most assuredly his private concept of what the privateer might have looked like.

5) *Laffite by Telfer* - This drawing shows a near profile of a man with arms folded. At least one version of this image is by E.H. Suydam and serves as the frontispiece of Lyle Saxon's *Laffite The Pirate* (1930). This is the most widely reproduced likeness of Laffite and has appeared in numerous newspaper articles, books, and even on a commemorative medal struck by the Paris Mint. This graphic representation did not originate with Suydam, but the Suydam rendition assuredly contributes to the overwhelming popularity of the likeness.

Edward Suydam and Lyle Saxon maintained a social, as well as a business, relationship. Suydam is mentioned several times in a fascinating little book by Saxon, *The Friends of Joe Gilmore and Some Friends of Lyle Saxon* (1948). He has also been mentioned as forming

an integral part of parties held by the legendary Weeks Hall, the "Master" of the Shadows on the Teche mansion in New Iberia, Louisiana.



Laffite by Telfer

Galveston historian Dr. J.O. Dyer has ridiculed this version by writing, "When prominent newspapers and historians keep on printing a picture of an Italian bandit with a mustache and pass it on for Laffite [sic], who wore neither mustache nor uniform, there is little wonder that Laffite the pirate, and his treasure, will live on" (Dyer, 1916).

The original artist of this likeness of Laffite requires deeper study. This famous profile was executed by John R. Telfer, and might be found to be an accurate representation. Telfer is listed in *Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Carvers*, and in *New York Historical Society Dictionary of Artists in America*. The latter work indicates that Telfer was in Cincinnati at one time. Some of Telfer's works are marked "St. Louis".

Several works by Telfer appear in Thrall's *Pictorial History of Texas*, including "John A. Murrell", "Aransas Bay", "A Chief of the Karankawas", "Placido, Chief of The Tonkawas", "A Caddo Chief", and the original "Laffite". Considering the nature of these subjects, the probability is high that Telfer may have traveled to the Texas Gulf Coast at a time when Laffite was in residence at Galveston.

Thus, the image which has traditionally been used by newspaper writers and other comparatively superficial investigators simply by default, might enjoy the highest level of historic support as being authentic.

Further work regarding Telfer, his dates, locales, and travels could be pivotal in establishing the authenticity of his representation of Laffite.

6) *Liberty Laffite #1* - This is a daguerreotype reportedly dated June, 1839, and currently preserved in the Sam Houston Regional Library at Liberty, Texas. If this is a representation of Jean Laffite, it is at an age of fifty-nine years. The subject is shown in a near three-quarters view.



Liberty Laffite #1

7) *Laffite by De Franca* - This is a painting, dated circa 1840 to 1842, purportedly depicting Jean Laffite and his wife and two sons, by artist Manoel Joachim De Franca. Laffite would have been approximately fifty-eight to sixty years of age at the time of this painting.



Laffite by De Franca

De Franca was a native of Oporto, Portugal, who immigrated to the United States as a young boy. "He studied art in Philadelphia and became one of the original members of the Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia, was made a member of its council, 1835-36, and became controller in 1837. De Franca later removed to St. Louis and for many years had his studio on Pine Street between Seventh and Eighth" (Arthur, 1952). Stanley Clisby Arthur, whose *Jean Laffite, Gentleman Rover*, is heavily based upon material available from the contested *Laffite Journals*, has claimed that De Franca and Laffite were well acquainted and shared an interest in communism. Arthur referred to the De Franca Laffite by claiming, "About 1842, when the boys [Glenn Henri and Jules Jean] were six and eight, Jean, his wife Emma, and their two sons posed, so it is claimed, for De Franca, who made the full-length oil portrait of the family now hanging in John A. Laffite's Kansas city home. Reproduced as a frontispiece for this work." It is not the De Franca Laffite which served as the frontispiece for the Arthur book, but the Laffite by Gros.

A difficulty exists with the Laffite by De Franca which only contributes to its questionable status as an accurate representation of Laffite. There is a possibility that two versions of this work exist, or have existed. Did De Franca execute two very similar versions, or did an unknown individual alter the original, thereby creating the second version?

One version of this painting appears in the aforementioned 1952 work by Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Jean Laffite, Gentleman Rover*. Arthur was one of the first writers to base his works upon the material provided by John A. Laflin.

Another, very similar, version of this work appeared in *The Journal of Jean Laffite: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, published in 1958 by Vantage Press.

The painting depicted in the 1958 book is either a similar work by De Franca, or an alteration of that depicted in the 1952 book. The picture in Arthur's book shows no background, whereas the later *Journal* picture has a background showing a low brick wall and the Meramec river. Further, the clothing in the *Journal* version is different from that in Arthur's book, and the poses somewhat different. Clothing in the earlier Arthur book is anachronistically inappropriate, being of a later period.

Both the 1952 and the 1958 publications apparently refer to the same original work by De Franca. However, one "original" now hangs in the library at Liberty and, paradoxically, another

"original" has also been reported to have been destroyed in a fire when John A. Laflin's home burned on December 8, 1959 (Anonymous, 1960). One hypothesis suggests that De Franca executed two very similar paintings, one having been preserved in Liberty, the other having been destroyed in a fire.

A less charitable analysis, reportedly proffered by Laffite authority and Laffite Society member Robert Vogel, suggests that one "original" exists and was published in the Arthur book of 1952. John A. Laflin, having learned of the difficulties existing with that particular version, then altered, or caused to be altered, the De Franca work prior to its publication in his *Journal* (Sherron, n.d.).

8) *Liberty Laffite #2* - This is a daguerreotype dated June, 1849, and is presently in the library at Liberty. It shows an individual who, if Jean Laffite, would have been sixty-seven years old, in a nearly frontal pose.



Liberty Laffite #2

9) *Laffite by Little* - This is a painting by Lois Ann Little, purportedly a granddaughter of Jean Laffite, dated 1853. The painting shows Laffite, at age seventy-three, looking straight at the artist.

Results of the Analysis

The results of the analysis indicated the probability that the ratios derived from the following sets of pictures were statistically significant.

Gros-Jarvis
Gros-Fortier

Jarvis-Fortier

Liberty #1-Little

Liberty #1-Liberty #2

De Franca-Liberty #1

De Franca-Liberty #2

De Franca-Little

Liberty #2-Little



Laffite by Little

This study has not established Laffite's likeness, but has clarified the probabilities associated with the different purported likenesses studied.

The initial results suggest that the "early" likenesses of Laffite (Gros, Jarvis, Fortier) correlate highly and suggest that they may be of the same individual. The "late" likenesses (Liberty #1, Liberty #2, De Franca, Little) also correlate highly and suggest that they also might be of the same individual. The "early" and the "late" likenesses do not, however, correlate significantly and suggest that the "early" and "late" likenesses are not of the same individual.

The Laffite by Van Everen does correlate

significantly with the likeness by Gros. The possibility exists that Van Everen was aware of the Gros work and used it as a model, but no evidence has been uncovered to support such a hypothesis.

The Laffite owned by Fortier must be located and the artist established.

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JEAN LAFFITE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE
A CHECK LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS THROUGH 1958
(PART II OF II - THE TWENTIETH CENTURY)
COMPILED BY ROBERT C. VOGEL

Editor's Note: The first part of this check list, covering 19th-century works, appeared in the previous issue of The Lafitte Society Chronicles as the Program Abstract for the March 1996 featured presentation.

1902

98. Mary Devereux, *Lafitte of Louisiana*, illustrated by Harry C. Edwards (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.) - romantic novel.
99. John Randolph Spears, "True Story of Lafitte," in *Munsey*, vol. 28.

1903

100. Leonidas Hubbard, Jr., "Barataria: The Ruins of a Pirate Kingdom," in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. IXC (June).

1904

101. Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America During the Second Administration of James Madison*, vol. XI (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
102. Alcee Fortier, *A History of Louisiana*, vol. III (New York: Goupils & Co. of Paris).

1905

103. Grace King and John R. Ficklen, Jr., *Stories from Louisiana History* (New Orleans: L. Graham Co.).

1907

104. E.C. Littlejohn, "Lafitte, the Lord of Campeachy," in *Elite Magazine*, vol. I (February).
105. J.E. Chamberlin, *Its of History*.

1909

106. Victor Jean Lavalette, "The True Story of Jean Lafitte," in *Gulf Coast Magazine*, vol. IV (January).
107. *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans), 22 April - "Lafitte's Treasure".

1911

108. Frank E. Schoonover, "In the Haunt of Jean Lafitte," in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 124 (December).
109. John Randolph Spears, "Laffite the Last of the Buccaneers," in *Outing*, vol. 58 (May).
110. Carlos Gilman Calkins, "The Repression of Piracy in the West Indies, 1814-1825," in *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 37.

1913

111. E. Alexander Powell, *Gentleman Rovers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) - reprinted in 1922 as *Some Forgotten Heroes*.
112. A.J. Himel, "Lafitte the Pirate Hero of Barataria and Galveston," in *Pan American Magazine*, vol. XVI (September).

1914

113. Alcee Fortier, ed., *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons Arranged in Cyclopedic Form*, 3 vols. (Century Historical Association).

1915

114. Frank R. Stockton, *Buccaneers and Pirates of Our Coasts* - reprint of 1898 edition.

1916

115. Gaspar F. Goodrich, "Our Navy and the West Indian Pirates: A Documentary History," in *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. XLII.

1917

116. *Galveston Daily News*, 11 April - Harry Bengé Crozier, "Lafitte, 'Lord of Galveston Island', Reigned Here in 1817."
117. Julian Leonard Street, "From Antiques to Pirates," in *American Adventures*.

1919

118. Gaspar Gusachs, "Lafitte, the Louisiana Pirate and Patriot," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. II.

1920

119. Gaspar Gusachs, "Controversy of Lafitte's Biography," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. III.
120. First of forty-four articles by Dr. J.O. Dyer in the *Galveston Daily News* - in Dyer Scrapbook at Rosenberg Library, 1920-1924.

1922

121. Charles Tenney Jackson [pen name: "Jack Tennison"], *Captain Sazarac* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, and reprinted same year by Grosset and Dunlap) - basis of 1926 silent movie, *The Eagle of the Sea*.
122. Sydney Shields, *Jean Lafitte: A Romantic Melodrama in Four Acts* (New York: C.C. Dohen).

1924

123. Doctor Frank [pseudonym of Henry Franklin Triplett], *Negrolana* (Boston: Christopher Pub. House).
124. Elizabeth Wilkinson, *Monsieur Lafitte (Jean Lafitte) - Pirate-Patriot, South Louisiana, 1808-1815* (New Orleans: Louisiana Printing Co.) - drama script.
125. Philip Gosse, *Pirates Who's Who: Giving Particulars of the Lives & Deaths of the Pirates & Buccaneers*, illustrated (Boston: C.E. Lauriat) - reprinted in 1968.
126. Julia Beazley, "The Uneasy Ghost of Lafitte," in *Texas Folklore Society Publications*, vol. 3.
127. E.G. Littlejohn, "Life and Legends of Lafitte the Pirate," in *Texas Folklore Society Publications*, vol. 3.
128. J.O. Webb, "Lafitte Lore," in *Texas Folklife [sic] Society Publications*, vol. 3.
129. Walter B. Lister, "Buried Treasure of Jean Lafitte," in *Frontier Times*, vol. I (May).

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130. Walter B. Lister, "Portrait of a Pirate," in *American Mercury* (February).
131. Hudson Grunewald, "The Romance of Jean Lafitte," in *New Orleans Life*, vol. I.
132. Don C. Seitz, *Under the Black Flag* (New York: Dial Press).
133. John S. Kendall, "Piracy in the Gulf of Mexico," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. VIII - "The Huntsmen of Black Ivory" by the same author in the same journal, 1940.
134. C.H.L. Johnston, *Famous Privateersmen and Adventurers of the Sea*.

1926

135. *Galveston News*, 19 September - Joseph O. Dyer's "Jean Lafitte, Buccaneer, Had Most Colorful Career."
136. *History of the Lives and Bloody Exploits of the Most Noted Pirates* (New York: Empire Book Co.).
137. Lawton Bryan Evans, *The Pirate of Barataria* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley Co.) - also published under the title *Pirate Gold*.
138. Polan Banks, *Black Ivory* (New York: Harper & Bros.) - historical romance.
139. *Eagle of the Sea* (silent film) - Paramount Pictures release based on Charles Tenney Jackson's novel, *Captain Sazarac*, adapted by Julia Josephsson, produced by B.P. Schulberg.
140. Walter B. Lister, "Vindication of Jean Lafitte," in *Frontier Times*, vol. III (May).
141. *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 7 November - "Trees Uprooted in Quest for Pirate Gold: South Louisiana Pitted by Seekers of Treasure Said to Have Been Buried by Lafitte or His Men," by Maurice

Elfer.

1927

- 142. Georges d'Anglade, "Une Page de l'Histoire de la Louisiane: Les Lafitte," in *Revue des Questions Historiques*, vol. XI (Paris).
- 143. Marquis James (1891-1935), "Napoleon, Junior," in *The American Legion Monthly*, vol. III.
- 144. *Galveston Daily News*, 30 October - "Romance Is Outstanding in Life of Jean Lafitte, for Years Ruler of Galveston."

1928

- 145. James Frank Dobie, "Mystery of Lafitte's Treasure," in *Yale Review*, vol. XVIII.
- 146. George Fort Gibbs, *The Shores of Romance* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.).

1929

- 147. Gardner Allen, *Our Navy and the West Indian Pirates* (Salem, MA).
- 148. Rupert Sargent Holland, *The Pirate of the Gulf*, illustrated by Lyle Justis (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.) - juvenile fiction.
- 149. Edwin Legrand Sabin, *Wild Men of the Wild West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co.).

1930

- 150. Lyle Saxon, *Lafitte the Pirate*, illustrated by E.H. Suydam (New York: Robert L. Crager Co.) - historical novel, frequently reprinted.
- 151. J. Frank Dobie, *Coronado's Children* (Dallas: Southwest Press).
- 152. Reginald Wright Kauffman, *Pirate Jean* (New York: Macaulay Co.).
- 153. Robert William Chambers, *The Rake and the Hussey* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.).
- 154. Paul Jones Robert, *Grande Terre, an Historical Romance of Older Creole Days* (Washington: Congressional Press).

1931

- 155. Walter Prichard, ed., "George Graham's Mission to Galveston in 1818: Two Important Documents Bearing Upon Louisiana History," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. XIV.
- 156. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, *LaFitte's Lieutenant* (Cleveland: Arthur Westbrook Co.) - paperback reprint of 1884 edition.
- 157. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, *LaFitte: The Pirate of the Gulf* (Cleveland: Arthur Westbrook Co.).
- 158. H. Dickenson, "Pirate or Patriot?", in *Collier's*, 25 April.
- 159. A. Hyatt Verrill, *The Real Story of the Pirate* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.).

1932

- 160. Philip Gosse, *History of Piracy* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co.).
- 161. Carrie J. Couch, "The Lord of Galveston," in *National Republic* (May).

1933

- 162. Hervey Allen, *Anthony Adverse* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart).
- 163. *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), "Parentage of Lafitte Seems Cleared Up. Was Child of N.O. Couple, Records Reveal," by Catherine B. Dillon.

1934

- 164. Mitchell V. Charnley, *Jean Lafitte, Gentleman Smuggler* (New York: Viking Press) - historical novel.

1935

- 165. Sallie Lee Bell, *Marcel Armand, A Romance of Old Louisiana; Being the Story of a Lieutenant of Jean Lafitte's Pirate Band and of Elbee Rochelle, A Lady of New Orleans, With Whom He Fell in Love, and Thereby Acquired a Mortal Enemy* (Boston: L.C. Page & Co.).

1937

166. G. Harrison Orians, "Lafitte: A Bibliographical Note," in *American Literature*, vol. VII.

1938

167. *The Buccaneer* (motion picture) - directed by Cecil B. De Mille, screenplay by Jeanie Macpherson, Edwin Justus Mayer, Harold Lamb, and V. Gardner Sullivan; starring Fredric March (Laffite), Akim Tamiroff (Youx), Walter Brennan, and Franciska Gaal.
168. *States* (New Orleans), 17 March - Meigs O. Frost, "Bayou Folk Dig for Pirate Gold" - in the 24 March edition appeared Frost's "Land Tiger Housed in Sea Tiger's Home."
169. J. Ignacio Rubio Mane, *Los Piratas Lafitte* (Mexico City: Editorial Polis).
170. Jesse A. Ziegler, *Wave of the Gulf: Jesse Ziegler's Scrapbook of the Gulf Coast Country* (San Antonio: Naylor Co.).
171. Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co.).
172. *Historical Sketch of Jean and Pierre Lafitte* (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum).
173. Federal Writers Project, *New Orleans City Guide* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., American Guide Series).
174. Harris Gaylord Warren, "Documents Relating to George Graham's Proposals to Jean Laffite for the Occupation of the Texas Coast," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXI.

1939

175. Stanley Faye, "Privateersmen of the Gulf and Their Prizes," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXII.

1940

176. Stanley Faye, "The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite," and "Privateers of Guadeloupe and Their Establishment in Barataria," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXIII.
177. J. Ignacio Rubio Mane, "Los Lafitte, Famosos Piratas, y sus Últimos Días en Yucatán," in *Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística*, vol. 54.
178. Charles Ramsdell, "Why Jean Lafitte Became a Pirate," in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, vol. XLIII.
179. Harris Gaylord Warren, "Documents Relating to Pierre Laffite's Entrance Into the Service of Spain," in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, vol. XLIV - same author, "Documents Relating to the Establishment of Privateers at Galveston, 1816-1817," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXIII.
180. Edward Alexander Parsons, "Jean Lafitte in the War of 1812: A Narrative Based on the Original Documents," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. L - Parsons later published a brief notice on Laffite sources in *The Wonder and the Glory: Confessions of a Southern Bibliophile* (New York: The Thistle Press, 1962).
181. Mrs. Theresa M. Hunter, *The Saga of Jean Lafitte; Word Pictures of a Picturesque Southern Pirate*, illustrated by Frank Anthony Stanush (San Antonio: Naylor Co.) - historical novel based on author's series of articles published in the *Dallas Morning News* in 1930, "Blood and Booty - The Story of Laffite," etc.

1942

182. *Galveston Daily News*, 11 April - J. Frank Dobie, "Patriot or Pirate, Lafitte's Footprints Still Imbedded on Gulf Coast."

1943

183. Ray M. Thompson, *The Land of Lafitte the Pirate* (New Orleans: Jefferson Parish Yearly Review).
184. Harris Gaylord Warren, *The Sword Was Their Passport: A History of American Filibustering in the Mexican Revolution* (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press).

1944

185. *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 23 January - Ray M. Thompson, "Lafitte - the Reluctant Pirate."

1945

186. Federal Writers Project, *Louisiana: A Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House) - W.P.A. American Guide Series.

1946

187. Monte Barrett, *Tempered Blade* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.) - Jim Bowie novel.

1947

188. Iris Vinton, *We Were With Jean Lafitte at New Orleans* (Gosset) - juvenile fiction.

1949

189. Charles A. Schmidt, *Corsair and Crinoline, an Original Play in Three Acts Based on Incidents in the Life of Jean Lafitte* (University of Texas Master's thesis).

190. Armstrong Sperry, *Black Falcon, A Story of Piracy and Old New Orleans* (Philadelphia: J.C. Winston Co.).

1950

191. *The Last of the Buccaneers* (motion picture) - released by Columbia Pictures Corporation, produced by Sam Katzman, directed by Lew Landers, screenplay by Robert E. Kent, starring Paul Henreid (Laffite), Jack Oakie (Dominique), Karin Booth.

192. Stewart H. Holbrook, "There Was a Man: Jean Laffite," *Esquire* (March).

1951

193. Robert Tallant, *The Pirate Lafitte and the Battle of New Orleans* (New York: Random House) - juvenile fiction by a protégé of Lyle Saxon.

194. James Edward Parkin, *Jean Lafitte in History, Legend, and Literature* (Southern Methodist University Master's thesis in English).

1952

195. Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Jean Lafitte, Gentleman Rover* (New Orleans: Harmanson).

1954

196. Louis Bennett Davidson, *Strange Crimes at Sea* (New York: Corwell).

1955

197. Madeleine Fabiola Kent, *The Corsair: A Biographical Novel of Jean Lafitte, Hero of the Battle of New Orleans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company) - biographical novel based on information provided by John Andrechyne Lafitte.

1958

198. *The Buccaneer* (color motion picture) - released by Paramount Pictures, directed by Anthony Quinn, screenplay by Jesse L. Lasky, Jr., Bernice Mosk; starring Yul Brynner (Laffite), Charles Boyer (You), Charlton Heston (Jackson), Claire Bloom, Inger Stevens, Henry Hull, and E.G. Marshall [remake of the 1938 film].

199. [John Andrechyne Lafitte], *The Journal of Jean Lafitte: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story* (New York: Vantage Press).

GENERAL MEETING SUMMARIES AND FEATURED PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

The Laffite Society generally publishes in *The Laffite Society Chronicles* abstracts of featured talks presented at the General Meetings, when the nature and length of these featured presentations lend themselves to such inclusion, and when the speakers facilitate same. These abstracts might contain information which is in conflict with the opinions of others or established documentation. The material contained in this section does not, therefore, necessarily reflect the position of The Laffite Society. The Society does, however, encourage discourse regarding conflicting viewpoints, because it believes such discourse often leads to a broader and deeper understanding of the topics of discussion.

The Society recognizes that *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is its primary link with those members who do not attend monthly meetings. Therefore, even when a general meeting includes no featured presentation, the topics there discussed are presented in summarized fashion in this section, to impart some feeling of that meeting's content.

Monday, July 8, 1996

Jeff Modzelewski, Editor of Publications for The Laffite Society, gave an amusing and informative talk on myths, both in the abstract and with regard to Jean Laffite. Mr. Modzelewski discussed different kinds of myths; how a myth arises and grows in acceptance, particularly when documented fact about its subject is scarce; the social, psychological, and historical purposes served by myths; and the separation of fact from fiction as a process termed "demythification". See the article entitled "The Mythification of Jean Laffite" in this section.

Monday, August 12, 1996

No featured presentation was scheduled for this month's meeting.

Laffite Society member Louise Nichols of Yesterday's Books (see the "Program Abstracts" section of the prior issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*) provided a table display of thirteen French maps dating from 1757 to 1868, and numerous books on Texas and Louisiana history, all available for purchase.

Jack Mitchell, accompanied by his wife Nora, described the presentations mounted by "The Buccaneers", the spiritual heirs of "The Contrabanders", a 35-year-old social club of some one hundred members representing Lake Charles and southwestern Louisiana. The group dons pirate attire for their lively public performances, staged complete with militia and cannon raids using real gunpowder.

Laffite Society member Larry Pierce, a regular participant in the summer 1996 archaeological investigation at the site of Laffite's Maison Rouge (see the article entitled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation" in this issue), displayed photos of the project's progress.

Laffite Society Archaeological Committee member Becky Hall described the investigation currently under way into the wreckage of the French ship "La Belle," commanded by La Salle, which foundered circa 1686 some ten miles from the Texas coast in Matagorda Bay during a hurricane. A six-foot-long, 800-pound bronze cannon is one of the important artifacts that has been retrieved from the site.

Laffite Society member Dr. Reginald Wilson discussed a study which he will spearhead of the characteristics of Jean Laffite's handwriting. Dr. Wilson has provided the Society with copies of several letters allegedly penned by the privateer, the originals of which were at first housed in the Cabildo in New Orleans and were eventually acquired by The Parsons Collection at The University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Wilson also reported on findings of Mr. Charles Fisher, a local businessman and long-term historian in Dayton, Texas, who worked closely with former Texas Governor Price Daniels to locate the site of the fort at Champ D'Asile. The investigation concluded that the site now lies under the waters of the Trinity River.

Monday, September 9, 1996

As this month's featured presentation, Jim Nonus, Third Vice President - Special Events, arranged the screening of the 1938 Paramount epic film, "The Buccaneer". The film was mounted jointly by The Laffite Society and The Strand Theatre at the facilities of the latter, 2317 Ships Mechanic Row in Galveston. A silent-auction fundraiser took place in the Theatre's lobby during the presentation of the film.

"The Buccaneer" was produced and directed by Cecil B. De Mille from a screenplay adapted from Lyle Saxon's *Laffite, the Pirate*. The movie starred Fredric March as Jean Lafitte, with a supporting cast which

included Spring Byington as Dolly Madison, Franciska Gaal as Gretchen, Hugh Sothern as Andrew Jackson, Akim Tamiroff as Dominique You, and Walter Brennan as Jackson's right-hand man Ezra Peavey.

The plot, with some added fictionalization, is one familiar to connoisseurs of the life of the privateer: in brief, bad-guy smuggler turns good-guy patriot and saves the day for the Americans at the Battle of New Orleans. Reviews of the day generally lauded the production, the main criticism finding fault with March's attempted French accent.

Monday, October 14, 1996

No featured presentation was scheduled for this month's meeting.

Kathy Modzelewski, Second Vice President - Membership, distributed updated membership information, rosters, and applications to members present. Members absent would receive the same distribution through the mail.

Meeting attendees discussed an upcoming excursion being orchestrated by Jim Nonus, Third Vice President - Special Events: a trip to Laffite's Grand Isle and Grande Terre. This special event was tentatively planned for spring 1997 [editor's note: the dates have since been set as Friday through Sunday, May 9-11, 1997]. Another possible special event for the future, an excursion to historic Natchitoches, Louisiana, was also discussed.

The production of a "Laffite primer" - a basic, condensed text presenting the fundamentals of Laffite fact and legend - was approved. Such a text would be especially informative for those newly involved with the Society who are curious about, but as yet know little of, Jean Laffite. The primer might be published in each issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* as a tool to bring new members "up to speed", to acquaint them with the various topics that most lend themselves as jumping-off points for further research, such as the privateer's activities after his departure from Galveston.

Jeff Modzelewski, Editor of Publications, distributed the newly-printed third issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* to members present; those absent would receive their copies through the mail. The creation of the Editorship (at the time of the election of the Society's current Board of Directors in August 1996) has enabled the publication to receive a focused creative attention which should allow both an increased consistency of format, as well as a planned development to reflect the nature of the Society as it matures.

Deposited in the archives as donations from Patrick Lafitte, a Society member in France, were the following:

- a copy of an international register of about two thousand names of persons surnamed "Lafitte", along with their addresses;
- a picture in color of a ship named "Jean Laffite" that is thought to be located in the Yucatán, Mexico;
- copies of two versions of a Laffite coat of arms, one in blue and yellow showing three black owls on a field of gold, with legends describing the crest's symbols.

Dave Roberts, Laffite Society Press Director, discussed plans to create a press release, destined for newspapers in Louisiana and Texas, in the form of a "Letter to the Editor". The release would publicize the existence of the Society, to broaden its information base and to attract new members.

Monday, November 11, 1996

Physicist and archaeologist Sheldon Kindall, who directed the summer 1996 investigation at the site of Laffite's Maison Rouge, presented an interim report on the findings. Mr. Kindall displayed several containers of small articles - mostly fragments of bone, glass, and ceramics - recovered from the six pits excavated, and explained the proper procedures for the cleaning, classification, and preservation of these artifacts. See the article entitled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation" in this issue.

Tuesday, December 10, 1996

Laffite Society members and guests this month enjoyed, in lieu of a formal meeting, what has become a tradition in the Society's modest life span: the Annual Holiday Social. The evening was staged at The Eiband's Gallery of Jim and Margaret Earthman, Treasurer and member-at-large, respectively, of The Laffite Society. At the party, attendees welcomed into the Society several new members, and enjoyed refreshments and one another's company in a relaxed yet elegant atmosphere.

THE MYTHIFICATION OF JEAN LAFFITE

JEFF MODZELEWSKI

I am a direct descendant of the famous privateer Jean Laffite. I know, I know, anyone who has seriously researched the life of this gentleman has likely come across half a dozen people who claim, with varying degrees of credibility, that they, too, are descendants of Laffite, so most of you readers are now thinking, "I've heard that one before." But in my case it is true. It really is! Please bear with me as I elaborate.

My mother is a proud product of good, full-blooded Irish stock. Her ancestors, for multiple generations extending well back into the nineteenth century, have hailed from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, "The Steel City," which lies at the point where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers unite to form the mighty Ohio.

Now, as you might believe, Jean Laffite did not die in Mexico a few years after he departed Galveston, as some incorrectly assert. Various items of documentary evidence, including the justly celebrated *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, ably reflect the fact that the privateer did not experience his demise from a tropical fever in the jungles of the Yucatán, nor in a battle with other pirates just off its coast, but instead eventually abandoned the seafaring life, settled down to become a gentleman farmer in the American Midwest, and died a natural death in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Jean Laffite, in his later years, engendered a son named Etienne (the French Christian name corresponding to the English "Stephen"), who in the 1880's sailed first down the Mississippi to its confluence with the Ohio, and then up the latter to its origin at Pittsburgh. As shrewd a businessman as his renowned father, Etienne Laffite anticipated the enormous growth that Pittsburgh's burgeoning steel industry would soon experience as the Industrial Revolution matured, and he decided early on that he would grab for himself a piece of the action.

As coincidence or fate would have it, Etienne Laffite became acquainted with, courted, and later married, my mother's paternal grandmother. Her son - my grandfather - would recount to my brother and me, when we were young boys, tales of the privateer, anecdotes that had been passed down by word of mouth, generation after generation. We have even conserved a whittled, eight-inch-tall wooden figure of a pirate, and the aged knife that

produced the piece, as tangible keepsakes of its alleged carver, the great Jean Laffite himself.

At this point in the article, allow me to interject that if any readers have swallowed my claim in the preceding verbiage - that Jean Laffite sired a son named Etienne who settled in Pittsburgh, married my great-grandmother, and is thus my direct ancestor - , I would like to discuss with them the sale of some prime real estate which I own, at a true bargain of a deal. Excepting the fact that my mother's family really does hail from Pittsburgh, this article's introductory text is a product of my imagination.

That piece of creative writing does, however, highlight just how easily a myth can arise and, given the right sets of ears upon which to fall, can grow to achieve a good deal of acceptance with little or no documented fact to support it, especially as the years recede and reliable sources capable of corroborating the alleged truths have themselves long since passed into history.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1973 edition: G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, MA) defines a myth as "a traditional story of ostensibly historical content whose origin has been lost...[a story] that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon...a person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence."

If we note in the preceding definitions the use of the phrases "ostensibly historical," "origin has been lost," and "unverifiable existence," we realize that we are discussing possible flotsam and jetsam drifting - or careening - through the hallowed halls of methodical historical research.

Myths might be separated into four broad categories:

- Theogonic - Stories which narrate the origin of the gods
- Aetiological - Stories of fictive events which are assigned as causes of given rites or customs
- Nature - Stories in which phenomena of nature are fictively described as to their origins
- Culture - Stories in which some hero (man, god, or animal) imparts the arts of life to man

Within the preceding framework, we would categorize myths involving Jean Laffite as "nature" myths.

There exists a direct, inverse relationship between the quantity of documented fact extant regarding a subject, and the ease with which myths about that same subject come into being and are promulgated. The more copious the documentation, the more scarce the myths. The more scarce the documentation, the less the constraint exercised by known fact, permitting myths to be born and to thrive, often from a need for psychological closure where missing knowledge has left a void.

Since so much that relates to Laffite is either undocumented or is supported by documentation whose veracity is questionable, it is easy to understand that Jean Laffite has become the center of many myths in the one and three-quarters centuries since he flourished.

Before examining examples of Laffite myths, I raise, as an interesting semantic aside, the question: what is the difference between a myth, and a theory or hypothesis? To be sure, the first term tends to bear a negative connotation, the latter two a positive one. Is a myth more outlandish, more farfetched, more lacking in support? Is a theory more probable, its suppositions more scientifically quantifiable? Is the distinction between a myth and a theory/hypothesis a blurry one, such that one person's theory might be another person's myth?

Let us look now at concrete examples of Laffite myths. For a first example, we know not the date and place of his birth; no baptismal certificate or civil birth record has been passed down to us, and Laffite himself is supposed to have provided differing "facts" on this matter depending upon what he judged that his audiences most desired - or, in Laffite's opinion, needed - to hear. Did the privateer first touch earth in Bayonne, France? in present-day Haiti? or in another place? Since there can be only one factual location, all others alleged must be myths, but can we - how do we - discriminate between the former and the latter?

Neither do we know the date and place of the privateer's death; we possess no death certificate, and are ignorant of the existence, if any, of a marked grave. Did Laffite die in the Yucatán within five years of departing Galveston? Or did he abandon his seafaring ways and settle down as a gentleman farmer somewhere in the American Midwest? The latter possibility is supported by *The Journals of Jean Laffite*, but these diaries are supposed by not a few

researchers to be themselves apocryphal, and if so, are simply another Laffite myth.

In today's world where the tourist dollar can speak loud and long, we can be certain that any locale which has even a remote chance of being the site of the privateer's birth or death would have an interest in claiming such, and as a by-product, would further stoke the myth oven.

Many related stories combine to form a collective root myth comprised of all those claims to descent - such as my facetious one in the beginning of this article - from Jean Laffite. Some of the claimants base their beliefs on their possession of the surname "Laffite" or one of its variant spellings; others have dissimilar surnames, but hold that their antecedents were, for example, the illegitimate offspring of Laffite and a consort, or that their surnames do differ only through the fault of a clerk's erroneous entry in church baptismal annals in generations past.

Whatever their argument, the claimed descendants of the privateer are legion; a surprising number have documented their hypotheses with extensive research, and some have managed to publicize their supposed famous genealogical connection in large American dailies.

The impetus is present for myths about Laffite descendants to grow boundlessly, because our human nature relishes a relationship, however tenuous, with a famous or notorious person. Even though Laffite came to be viewed by a certain segment of the society of his day as a despicable ruffian, the intervening years have converted his notoriety into renown. One would find it hardly more objectionable today to be related to Jean Laffite than to Mickey Mantle or Harry Truman.

Perhaps the most popular of Laffite myths are those involving buried treasure. Unlike the case of persons who claim descent from the privateer - where at least some minimal link uncovered via genealogical research must be asserted - virtually everyone can convince themselves that they, and only they, have deduced the location of a booty trove.

The shifting of shorelines over nearly two centuries; the changes in landmark perspective as palm trees and modern dwellings replace the scrub brush that once represented the only elevation in the topography of a barrier island named Galveston; the time, labor and expense to move cargo by early-19th-century means of transportation to advantageous hiding places; a modicum of study into these and other variables, especially when this study is bolstered by the existence of "treasure maps." could convince

many amongst us that we were one of the few to deduce the location of a cache of valuables.

In addition to these examples of what we might classify as "major" myths concerning Jean Laffite, other "minor" myths also exist. Perhaps most prominent among them, especially from the perspective of much of the Society's membership who are residents of Galveston, Texas, and its environs, is the location of the privateer's "Maison Rouge" on Galveston Island. An archaeological dig was conducted at the supposed site in 1984 with little tangible conclusion; a reprise occurred in the summer of 1996 (see the related article entitled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation" in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*), and it is hoped that at a future date the analysis of artifacts unearthed in this latter excavation will yield definitive conclusions regarding the existence of a Laffite-era occupation on the property.

Easy, then, is the process whereby myths are created; much more difficult it is to demythify a topic. This, nonetheless, is what we researchers attempt to do through our study of the life and times of Jean Laffite: we attempt to demythify aspects of his story, to separate the chaff from the grain, to winnow fact from legend.

To "demythify" is to ferret out the actual, the real, the true, the authentic, the genuine, of a topic. It does not always signify the "debunking" (a word imbued with connotations of exposure of flim-flammy and scam artists) of a hypothesis, but sometimes its confirmation. In this sense, to demythify means simply to determine whether the classification of a story can be changed from "possibly true" to "fact".

The first step in demythifying a topic is to study it in the depth surviving records permit, in sufficient detail and to the extent required to determine what has been documented about its origins. The best result one can hope to obtain is to be able to perform a careful, logical, orderly evaluation which will permit one to either refute the story (confirming it as fact, demythifying it), or will force an acknowledgment that evidence is insufficient to support a conclusion that the myth is not a myth.

The difficulty of this first step increases greatly as time passes, as the availability of original source documents and witnesses first dwindles, then vanishes. Happily for researchers of the coming years, the passage of time will likely prove to be less of a hindrance than it is for us, now that electronic media facilitate the archiving

and retrieval of vast amounts of data. As regards the era of Laffite, absence of data might not mean that the support was never there, but simply that it is there no longer.

The second step in demythification is to produce a report which documents the topic of study and its conclusions. Even if one is unable to demythify a topic - for example, because reliable support is no longer available -, the analytical procedures and sources employed should be recorded, to save future researchers from "reinventing the wheel" should they pursue research of the same topic at a later (months, decades, or generations) date.

To conclude, I will discuss one of the Laffite buried-treasure myths, this one possessing a bit of humor. The story recounted in the following two paragraphs is an abstract of an article which appeared in the *Galveston Daily News*, Section B, page 15, on February 1, 1970, titled "Is Skull That Of Jean LaFitte?".

A gentleman who owned and operated a shop in downtown Galveston told how an ancient, weather-beaten Indian came in one day, said that he wanted to go to Beaumont, and, in exchange for some cash, tendered a human skull. The skull bore markings which included a map of Galveston Island marked with an "X" at about the site of the Indian burial grounds on the western part of the island. Also written on the skull were the words "Capt. Gene LaFitte 1852."

The shop owner had never attempted to make use of the treasure map, to decipher its faded landmarks or coordinates, but he had taken the skull to some doctors to be dated. The doctors' concluded that the age of the skull was not inconsistent with the chronological era of Jean Laffite. The shop owner believed that the skull was that of the privateer, and that someone who both knew Laffite and the whereabouts of the treasure to which the map pointed, made the markings.

Add this, then, to the list of hundreds of buried-treasure stories about the privateer which are prime candidates for energetic efforts at demythification.

Jeff Modzelewski is Editor of Publications for The Laffite Society. He expresses his gratitude to R. Dale Olson, President of The Laffite Society, for the loan of documents from his personal library of Laffite material for use in this presentation and abstract.

THE 1996 MAISON ROUGE EXCAVATION

R. DALE OLSON AND JEFF MODZELEWSKI

As reported in a previous issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, an archaeological excavation of the lot that is traditionally supposed to be the Galveston Island site of Jean Laffite's Maison Rouge was undertaken in 1984. [Editor's note: see the article entitled "Archaeological Investigation of the Maison Rouge Site" in the January 1996 issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.]

Due to a series of difficulties and delays, a final, formal report on this 1984 excavation was not produced. Additionally, the artifacts retrieved during the project were never accurately catalogued nor professionally analyzed to determine if they proved an occupation of the site consistent with the time of Laffite's sojourn on the island, circa 1817-1820.

For longer than a decade these artifacts, which fill more than 120 crates, were housed in the care of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Houston's main campus. This vast store of relics was returned to Galveston Island only in 1996, and currently rests downtown in a private warehouse. [Editor's note: see the article entitled "Maison Rouge Site Artifacts Return to Galveston Island" in the January 1996 issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.] Laffite Society members Becky and Andy Hall, both trained archaeologists, plan to begin the classification, segregation, and cataloguing of this material beginning in the spring of 1997.

Sheldon Kindall, Regional Director of the Texas Archaeological Society and the lead archaeologist on the 1984 dig, had long suggested the desirability of a new excavation. Following consultation with members of both The Laffite Society and the Texas Archaeological Society, which confirmed that sufficient interest in a reprise of the project existed to bring it to fruition, it was decided that a new dig would commence in late June of 1997.

Members of various groups of avocational archaeologists, including the Brazosport, Houston, and Texas Archaeological Societies; members of The Laffite Society; and interested persons from the general public, attended a first-day, three-hour lecture and demonstration presented by Mr. Kindall on Saturday, June 29, 1996, in the conference room at The Eiband's Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street in Galveston.

Following the lecture-demonstration, the group adjourned to the excavation site, where other members of the various forenamed archaeological groups had begun the task of measuring and staking off the dig's pits. The locations of these pits were specifically chosen to complement and not duplicate those areas of the property which had been excavated twelve years earlier.

The excavation continued each Saturday for more than eight weeks, with a group of some twenty-five persons participating regularly. On the first few weekends, the group met at 9:00 a.m., unloaded supplies and refreshments, erected a camping-style shade canopy over the location of the longest pit, and then set to work. The participants generally worked at the same pit each week. The group broke for one-hour lunches in two shifts, then returned to work until mid- to late afternoon.

After a couple of Saturdays, however, it was decided to begin work at 7:00 rather than at 9:00 a.m., while the sun lay lower in the sky. The participants had found that the torrid Texas summer heat and humidity were amplified once the pits in which they were digging increased to such a depth that their heads were near or below ground level, eliminating any chance of a breeze.

Participants truly obtained a feel for the work of the professional archaeologist, learning to measure pit depth with a line level, dig carefully using the edge of a mason's trowel, sift buckets of earth for artifacts, bag and label finds with the pit number and depth at which encountered, etc.

Another large amount of material was recovered from this dig, including a varied assortment of buttons, bullets, bones, pottery shards, glass, and other items.

At this writing, the artifacts remain in the custody of Mr. Kindall. The next step of the project is for members of the various Societies to meet and clean the artifacts, then send them to different authorities in the Houston metropolitan area for analysis - one for pottery, one for glass, one for bone, etc. Mr. Kindall and others will compile the statements of these authorities and make a determination concerning the probability of a site occupancy consistent with the time of Laffite's. This phase of the project should then set in motion the generation of a formal report on the results of this 1996 excavation.

WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

JULY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

Tom Halko
Lafitte, Louisiana
Patrick Lafitte
Corneilla del Vercol, France
Tom and Sarita Oertling
Galveston, Texas
Jerry and Jennifer Patterson
Houston, Texas

Larry Pierce
Galveston, Texas
R. Patrick Rowles
Galveston, Texas
Kenneth Shelton, Jr.
Galveston, Texas
Lyda Ann Thomas
Galveston, Texas

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at The Eiband Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street, Galveston, TX, 77550, (409) 763-5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by member or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the Annual Holiday Social, which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October) on the same day as that month's general meeting, and normally either precede or follow same. Additional Board of Directors meetings may be scheduled at the Board's discretion.

In addition to the monthly meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. See, for example, in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, the special event described in the article entitled "The 1996 Maison Rouge Excavation," as well as the planned excursion to Grand Isle/Grande Terre mentioned in the "General Meeting and Featured Program Abstracts" section for the October 14, 1996 meeting.

Inquiries about upcoming special events may be directed to The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553, or to Third Vice President - Special Events, Jim Nonus, at (409) 763-5495. The Laffite Society will mail information to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

SPONSORSHIP OF MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

Since its inception, a special feature of The Laffite Society has been a presentation at monthly meetings by a Laffite Society member or guest speaker.

In an effort to augment the pool of available speakers, The Society has begun a program of "sponsorships" in which the expenses of guest speakers are paid by donations from individual members.

Given that all members of The Society do not enjoy equal access to meetings due to their distances from Galveston, it was felt by the Board that any expenses incurred relative to a guest speaker should not be taken from the general fund.

Sponsorships in the suggested amount of

\$20.00 each are available to members who wish to make such donations. While speakers, themselves, do not receive an honorarium, accommodations and other expenses incurred during travel are underwritten by The Laffite Society through these sponsorships of its members.

Members purchasing sponsorships are given special recognition at the appropriate meeting, and in the pages of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Persons wishing to make suggestions regarding future speakers should contact First Vice President Jean L. Epperson in care of The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUGUST 1996 - JULY 1998

PRESIDENT	R. DALE OLSON
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT	JEAN L. EFFERSON
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT	KATHY MODZELEWSKI
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COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH	BILL FOLEY
HISTORIAN	BERNADETTE FOLEY
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS	JEFF MODZELEWSKI
PRESS DIRECTOR	DAVE ROBERTS
EX-OFFICIO ADVISOR, HISTORICAL PRESERVATION	RANDY PACE

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Laffite Society is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the study of the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite and their contemporaries, and to the geographical locales and chronological era associated with them.

Annual dues are as follows:

Student	\$ 15.00
Senior (Over 65)	15.00
Institution	15.00
Individual	30.00
Family	35.00
Sustaining Member	100.00
Life Membership (One Payment)	350.00

THANK YOU FROM THE SOCIETY

To Jim and Margaret Earthman, for graciously continuing to allow The Society to hold its monthly meetings in the conference room of their Eiband's Gallery;

To Dorothy McD. Karilanovic, for performing professionally and punctually the necessary but unheralded task of recording the monthly meeting minutes of The Society in her role as Secretary;

To Press Director Dave Roberts, for his success in publicizing the existence and activities of The Society through the local media;

To Third Vice President - Special Events Jim Nonus, for his extra efforts in arranging for the screening of the classic film "The Buccaneers" for the September 1996 monthly meeting.